

THE ROBERT A. TAFT  
*Institute of Government*

Executive Registry

76-5037

August 18, 1976

TO: Hon. George Bush

FROM: Marilyn Chelstrom

The Institute has received a great deal of publicity this summer, including a full page in the August, 1976 issue of NATION'S BUSINESS.

Enclosed is a sampling.

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EXECUTIVE REGISTRY 177

*Public Affairs*

## PANORAMA OF THE NATION'S BUSINESS

By VERNON LOUVIERE  
Senior Editor

# Businesses Help Teachers to Learn Politics

**M**ANY of the men and women responsible for teaching about American government in schools across the nation have far too little knowledge of our political process.

A sampling of more than 1,000 elementary and high school teachers showed that roughly 30 percent had little academic background in political science and 20 percent had not taken a single course in the subject. Fewer than seven percent had majored in political science in college.

But the situation can be changed.

For 14 years, The Robert A. Taft Institute of Government has been getting teachers together for instruction in how to teach their students the intricacies of the American political system.

The teachers learn from experts who donate their time. The experts include senators, congressmen, presidential advisers, governors and other state officials, Republican and Democratic party leaders, newspaper columnists, lobbyists, local officials, and businessmen.

Each summer, the institute, established by friends of the late Senate Republican leader from Ohio, conducts seminars that run from two to six weeks. Teachers who attend pay only a modest registration fee; all other expenses are paid by the institute. The seminars are held at 35 colleges and universities around the country.

Some 10,000 teachers have gone through the course. Together, they teach more than one million students annually, so the snowballing effect of what they learn at the seminars is obvious. And the institute expects to have an even more widespread effect as more teachers take the course.

"Lifelong ideas about government and politics and the proper role of the citizen are formed beginning in grade school years and continuing through high school," says Lowell Wadmond, chairman of the institute's board of trustees. "Teachers have an awesome responsibility for



Hubert Humphrey is one of scores of political, business, and news figures who have donated time to help teachers learn about the political process. Some 10,000 teachers have attended seminars around the country sponsored by the New York-based Robert A. Taft Institute of Government.

transmitting the values of democracy from one generation to the next, and The Taft Institute is trying to help them."

The institute depends heavily on corporation and foundation grants. The average cost of sending one teacher to a Taft seminar is \$550.

More and more corporate leaders are being brought into the program so they can explain the role of business and government. Meanwhile, financial donations by business have been increasing.

"But often, we must educate corporate leaders on how important it is for young people to learn about the political system as well as the economic system," says Marilyn Chelstrom, executive director of the institute.

"Many young people are turned off on corporations, on big businesses. In the Taft seminars, we point out that businesses are not freewheeling agents making all the profits they can in any way they can, as so many young people believe. Instead, we point out, businesses must work within all sorts of controls and regulations established by various legislative bodies, which are made up of persons elected to office by the individual citizens."

In any year, the Taft seminar roster reads like a who's who in American government. When he was a congressman, President Ford took

part. Former Vice President and now Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey, Democratic National Chairman Robert S. Strauss, and Republican National Chairman Mary Louise Smith have also participated.

"Our emphasis is on practical politics—not the textbook approach to 'how-a-bill-becomes-a-law,' but the down-to-earth nitty-gritty of how politics works," explains Miss Chelstrom. "Taft fellows talk about how candidates are selected, why political party participation is important, how politics is financed, how campaigns are run, what lobbyists do, what the press does, and the how and why of political surveys. Most importantly, Taft fellows discuss the citizen's role in the whole process. Individuals learn they really can have something to say."

Many of the teachers have negative feelings about politics and politicians when they arrive on campus. They talk about corrupt politics and how politics is something for an elite few.

Their attitudes change, however, as they take the course.

Says one teacher: "I feel now that, although I might still not be politically effective, I can at least begin to understand and perhaps participate. I show my students how they, too, can begin. And just beginning is a big step for us both."

# The Greenville News-PIEDMONT

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## Fighting Political Apathy

Erosion of faith in government and politics has reached alarming proportions in the United States and threatens the security of the nation and all its citizens. No land can remain free and its citizens secure in their individual rights for long after the citizenry loses faith in national processes.

The surest sign of loss of faith in the nation's operating process is public apathy, or dropping out of the process by refusing to participate in government and the selection of governmental officers. Lack of participation has become painfully evident throughout the United States.

Citizens, of course, are disillusioned in part by the widespread corruption and lack of moral standards evident in governmental circles. But many are apathetic because they do not understand the real meaning of a truly free, representative government and how it is supposed to operate.

They fail to comprehend the role of the citizen in government, especially the importance of intelligent, unselfish citizen participation in the process of selecting governmental leaders.

It is axiomatic that corruption in government will not be controlled if the citizens who have the ultimate power to elect governmental decision-makers abdicate that power by failing to use it at the polls. Corruption and misgovernment in general will not cease unless the citizenry learns more about the operations of governmental machinery and the limits of government's capacity. It is of prime importance that citizens become better in-

processes are structured as they are.

In short, without extensive, informed citizen participation in its processes, government of, by and for the people, and the blessings of liberty which exist under that kind of government, cannot continue to endure for long.

It follows that programs and efforts to cure rampant citizen apathy and engender enlightened citizen participation are of paramount importance. No better way could be found to celebrate the nation's Bicentennial this year than to revitalize citizen enthusiasm for the political processes which govern the lives of citizens.

One program designed to do exactly that is the annual, nationwide series of seminars conducted at leading colleges and universities by the Robert A. Taft Institute of Government. The seminars are designed to help teachers help their students to overcome political apathy. For the fourth year one of the 35 annual seminars will be held at Clemson University June 7-18.

The 30 teachers from 19 South Carolina counties who will attend are part of the approximately 1,000 teachers getting Taft seminar training this year. In four years the seminar will have reached 120 teachers in 30 of South Carolina's counties. The pro-

gram reaches even more educators and the public through the facilities of the South Carolina Educational Television network, which carries programs about the Taft fellows.

The subject of the seminars is American democracy. Emphasis is given to such items as where governmental decisions are made and by whom, and on individual citizen responsibility for selecting decision makers.

Teachers attending the seminars are expected to use knowledge gained to instruct their students in government and politics, emphasizing the positive and stressing the importance of the processes and of citizen participation. This is vital, because without proper education there is no way to rebuild confidence in government, especially among young people.

The Taft seminar program at Clemson and on other campuses recognizes the awesome responsibility of the teacher to transmit true values and proper attitudes from one generation to another, and tries to help the teacher meet that responsibility. The program has helped many teachers, some of whom say the seminars have changed their own attitudes toward government and politics.

This is a worthwhile endeavor every year, but especially so in 1976 as the United States celebrates the 200th anniversary of the birth of its free, representative government. Clemson and its fine Department of Political Science are congratulated for cooperating with the Taft In-

## Precedent

When a 96-year-old woman died in Honolulu she left 278 descendants. That's the way to hurry the world along towards the starvation that's

# OKLAHOMA CITY TIMES

## EDITORIALS

24 . . . Tuesday, June 22,

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### Taft Institute's contribution

**O**NE of the annual institutions which has come to mean a lot to Oklahoma education is the Taft Institute, held at the campus of Oklahoma City University again this year. Despite probable great temptation, its sponsors have not added a Bicentennial theme this year. Yet it is one program which might well have earned that tag.

The Taft Institute seminars will be held at 35 U.S. colleges and universities throughout the country this summer. More than a thousand educators will take part, and in each the program will bring public officials, spokesmen for the press, the advertising community, and the broadcast industry before selected educators for frank discussions of public issues.

Among those speaking this year at the OCU seminar are U.S. Sens. Henry Bellmon and Dewey Bartlett of Oklahoma, and Gary Hart of Colorado. Hart is a graduate of Bethany Nazarene College. The U.S. House of Representatives sent Rep. James Jones of Tulsa. From state government, the seminar is hearing from Gov. David Boren and Speaker Bill Willis. Mayor Patience Latting and City Councilman Jerry Gilbert represent city government. The two ma-

jor political parties in Oklahoma sent their state chairmen, Bob Funston and Paula Unruh.

Along with spokesmen for the information media, these public officials state their own opinions on matters of current public interest and subject themselves to questioning.

It is an excellent way to bring government closer to the classroom, and remind the educators that our government is a collection of men and women and not a disembodied entity of papers and computers belching forth regulations for our lives. Certainly teachers who have personal acquaintance with those in office can speak more frankly to their classes on the topic.

The Taft Institute's contribution is thus to bring government closer to the people and particularly to the classroom. In so doing, it helps to remind us that ours is a government that is both responsive to the people and willing to hear the views of the citizens.

In this bicentennial year, with regulations pouring from Washington at the current rate of 63,000 pages per year, that is a worthy contribution to self-government in America.

## The Dallas Morning News

*The News, oldest business institution in Texas, was established in 1842  
while Texas was a Republic*

### Editorial Page

*Dick West, Editorial Director*

MONDAY, MAY 24, 1976

*Taft Institute:*

## Down From the Mountain Peaks

Suppose you were a local social science teacher; and suppose you wanted to learn more about government. At whose feet would you wish to sit? At the feet of people like Dolph Briscoe, Alan Steelman, Ralph Yarborough, Dale Milford, Jim Collins, Bob Folsom, Billy Clayton and John Whittington? But of course.

And that is precisely where, as happens each summer, 30 area teachers will be sitting from June 7 to July 6. The format is the 5th annual seminar of the Robert A. Taft Institute of Government at the Arlington campus of the University of Texas. Again, the codirectors are

Dr. George Wolfskill of the history department and Prof. Maurice I. Carlson of the English department.

The beauty of the Taft seminars is that they transport government from the lofty mountain peaks of theory down to the solid earth of actual practice. The three dozen public figures slated for appearances before the seminar unquestionably know whereof they speak. Is it possible for the participating teachers to sit through such an experience and not take away with them countless new insights to be handed on to their students? Anything's possible; but in this case, we doubt it.

THE ROBERT A. TAFT

*Institute of Government*

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